

Altho: A *General*

GENERAL VIEW

OF THE ARGUMENTS FOR

THE UNITY OF GOD;

AND AGAINST THE

DIVINITY AND PRE-EXISTENCE

OF CHRIST,

FROM REASON,

FROM THE SCRIPTURES,

AND FROM HISTORY.

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Advertisement.

IN writing this small piece I have two objects. One is a cheap and extensive circulation ; and the other to serve as a guide to those persons who may wish to preserve upon their minds a just idea of the *place* and *value* of any particular argument, in a miscellaneous controversy ; and to enable them to judge how far any particular advantage in argumentation affects the merits of the question in debate.



A General View, &c.

I.

Arguments from reason against the trinitarian hypothesis.

THAT the doctrine of the trinity could ever have been suggested by any thing in the course of nature (though it has been imagined by some persons of a peculiarly fanciful turn, and previously persuaded of the truth of it) is not maintained by any persons to whom my writings can be at all useful. I shall therefore only address myself to those who believe the doctrine on the supposition of its being contained in the scriptures, at the same time maintaining, that, though it is *above*, it is not properly *contrary* to reason; and I hope to make it sufficiently evident; either that they do not hold the doctrine, or that the opinion of *three divine persons constituting one God* is strictly speaking an *absurdity*, or *contradiction*; and that it is therefore incapable of any proof, even by miracles. With this view, I shall recite in order all the distinct modifications of this doctrine, and shew that, upon any of them, there is either no proper *unity*, in the divine nature, or no proper *trinity*.

If, with Dr. Waterland, and others who are reckoned the strictest Athanasians (though their opinions were not known in the time of Athanasius himself) it be supposed that there are

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three

three persons properly equal, and that no one of them has any sort of superiority over the rest, they are, to all intents and purposes, three distinct Gods. For if each of them, separately considered, be possessed of all divine perfections, so that nothing is wanting to complete divinity, each of them must be as properly a *God* as any being possessed of all the properties of man must be a man; and therefore *three persons* possessed of all the attributes of divinity must be as properly *three Gods* as three persons possessed of all human attributes must be three men. These three persons, therefore, must be incapable of any strict or numerical *unity*. It must be universally true, that *three things* to which the same definition applies can never make only *one thing* to which the same definition applies. And when by the words *thing*, *being*, or *person* we mean nothing more than, logically speaking, the *subject*, or *substratum* of *properties* or *attributes*, it is a matter of indifference which of them we make use of.

Each of these three persons may have other properties, but they must be numerically *three* in that respect in which the same definition applies to them. If, therefore, the three persons agree in this circumstance, that they are each of them *perfect God*, though they may differ in other respects, and have peculiar relations to each other, and to us, they must still be *three Gods*; and to say that they are only *one God* is as much a contradiction, as to say that three men, though they differ from one another as much as three men can do, are not three men, but only one man.

If

If it be said, with the Antenicene Fathers, and with bishops Pearson and Bull among the modern English writers, that the Father is the *fountain of deity*, and that the son is derived from him, whether necessarily or voluntarily, whether in time or from eternity, they cannot be of the same *rank*; but the Father will be possessed of an original, a real, and proper superiority to the Son; who will be no more than an *effect* of the Father's exertion of his powers, which is, to all intents and purposes, making the Son to be a *production*, or *creature* of the Father; even though it should be supposed with the antients that he was created out of the substance of the Father, and without taking any thing from him. Moreover, as upon this scheme the Son was never capable of giving birth to another person like himself, he must have been originally inferior in power to the Father, the source from which he himself sprung. On this scheme, therefore, there is no proper *equality* between these divine persons; and the Antenicene Fathers did not pretend that there was, but distinguished the Father by the epithet of *αὐτοθεός*, *God of himself*, and the Son by the inferior title of *θεός ex θεῷ*, *God of God*, or a derived God.

If it be said that there is only one intelligent supreme mind, but that it exerts itself three different ways, and has three different modes of action, or operation (which was the opinion of Dr. Wallis, and that which was generally ascribed to the antient Sabellians) with respect to one of which the same divine Being was called the Father, to another the Son, and another

the Holy Spirit; there is no proper *trinity* at all. For on the same principle one man, bearing three different offices, or having three different relations or capacities, as those of magistrate, father, son, &c. would be three different men.

Some represent themselves as believing the doctrine of the trinity by asserting with Dr. Doddridge*, that "God is so united to the derived nature of Christ, and does so dwell in it, that, by virtue of that *union*, Christ may be properly called God, and such regards become due to him, as are not due to any created nature, or mere creature, be it in itself ever so excellent."

What this *union* is, in consequence of which any creature can be entitled to the attributes and honours of his creator, is not pretended to be explained; but as we cannot possibly have any idea of an union between God and a creature, besides that of God being present with that creature, and acting by him, which is the same thing that is asserted by the *Arians* or *Socinians*, these nominal *trinitarians* must necessarily belong to one or other of these two classes. This is so evident, that it is hardly possible not to suppose but that they must have been much assisted at least in deceiving themselves into a belief that they were trinitarians, by the influence which a dread of the odium and other inconveniences attending the Arian or Socinian doctrine had on their minds. The pre-

* See his Lectures, proposition 128, p. 392.

sence of God the Father with any creature, whether it be called an union with him, or it be expressed in any other manner whatever, can be nothing more than the *deity of the Father* in that creature; and whatever it be that God voluntarily imparts, he may withdraw again at pleasure. And what kind of divinity must that be, which is dependent upon the will of another?

Upon none of the modifications, therefore, which have been mentioned (and all others may be reduced to these) can the doctrine of the trinity, or of three divine persons in one God be supported. In most of them the doctrine itself is lost, and where it remains, it is inconsistent with reason and common sense.

II.

Arguments from reason against the Arian hypothesis.

THE Arian doctrine, of the world having been made and governed not by the supreme God himself, but by Christ, the son of God, though no contradiction in itself, is, on several accounts, highly improbable.

Our reasoning from effects to causes, carries us no farther than to the immediate creator of the visible universe. For if we can suppose that being to have had a cause, or author, we may suppose that his cause or author had a higher cause, and so on *ad infinitum*. According to the light of nature, therefore, the immediate cause or author of the visible universe, is the
A 3 self.

self-existent first cause, and not any being acting under him, as his instrument. However, the scheme itself is not naturally impossible; since a being possessed of power sufficient to produce the visible universe, which is a limited production, may be *finite*, and therefore may derive his power and his being from one who is superior to him. But though the Arian scheme cannot be said to be in itself impossible, it is, on several accounts, extremely improbable *a priori*, and therefore ought not to be admitted without very strong and clear evidence.

If this great derived being, the supposed maker and governor of the world was united to a human body, he must either have retained and have exercised his extraordinary powers during this union, or have been divested of them; and either supposition has its peculiar difficulties and improbabilities.

If this great being retained his proper powers during this union, he must have been sustaining the whole universe, and superintending all the laws of nature, while he was an infant at the breast of his mother, and while he hung upon the cross. And to imagine the creator of the world to have been in those circumstances, is an idea at which the mind revolts, almost as much as at that of the supreme God himself being reduced to them.

Besides, if Christ retained and exercised all his former powers in this state of apparent humiliation, he must have wrought all his miracles by a power properly *his own*, a power naturally *belonging to him*, as much as the power of speaking and walking belongs to any other man.

man. But this was expressly disclaimed by our Saviour, when he said, that *of himself he could do nothing*, and that it was the *Father within him who did the works*. Also, on this supposition, it must have been this super-angelic being united to the body of Jesus, that raised him from the dead; whereas this is an effect which is always ascribed to God the Father only.

If, on the other hand, Christ was divested of his original powers, or *emptied himself* of them upon his incarnation, the whole system of the government of the universe must have been changed during his residence upon earth. Either some other derived being (which this scheme does not provide) must have taken his place, or the supreme being himself must have condescended to do that which the scheme supposes there was an impropriety in his doing. For certainly the making and the governing of the world would not have been delegated to another, if there had not been some good reason in the nature of things, (though it be unknown to us, and may be indiscoverable by us) why the world should have been made and governed by a derived being, and not by the supreme being himself. And this reason, whatever it was, must, as far as we can judge, have operated during the time that Christ was upon the earth as well as before.

If Christ was degraded to the state of a mere man during his humiliation on earth, reason will ask, why might not a mere man have been sufficient? Since, notwithstanding his original powers, nothing was, in fact, done by him, more than any other man, aided and assisted by God as he was, might have been equal to.

Arguments from reason

If we consider the object of Christ's mission, and the beings whom it respected, viz. the *race of man*, we cannot but think that there must have been a greater propriety, and use, in the appointment of a mere man to that office. What occasion was there for any being superior to man for the purpose of communicating the will of God to man? And as an example of a resurrection to an immortal life (to enforce which was the great object of his mission) the death and resurrection of one who was properly and simply a man, was certainly far better adapted to give men satisfaction concerning their own future resurrection, than the seeming death (for it could be nothing more) of such a being as the maker of the world, and the resurrection of a body to which he had been united. For, as he was a being of so much higher rank, it might be said, that the laws of his nature might be very different from those of ours; and therefore he might have privileges to which we could not pretend, and to which we ought not to aspire.

If the world was created and governed by a derived being, this being, on whom we immediately depended, would be that to whom all men would naturally look. He would necessarily become the object of their prayers, in consequence of which the supreme being would be overlooked, and become a mere cypher in the universe.

As modern philosophy supposes that there are innumerable worlds inhabited by rational and imperfect beings (for all *creatures* must be finite and imperfect) besides this of ours, it
cannot

cannot be supposed but that many of them must have stood in as much need of the interposition of the maker of the universe as we have done. And can we suppose either that this should be the only spot in the universe so highly distinguished, or that the maker of it should undergo as many degradations as this scheme may require?

The doctrine of Christ's pre-existence goes upon the idea of the possibility, at least, of the preexistence of other men, and supposes an immaterial soul in man, altogether independent of the body; so that it must have been capable of thinking, and acting before his birth, as well as it will be after his death. But these are suppositions which no appearance in nature favours.

The Arian hypothesis, therefore, though it implies no proper contradiction, is, on several accounts, highly improbable *a priori*, and therefore ought not to be admitted without very clear and strong evidence.

III.

Arguments against the Trinitarian and the Arian hypotheses from the scriptures.

I SHALL now shew, in as concise a manner as I can, that the doctrine of the trinity, and also the Arian hypothesis, has as little countenance from the scriptures as it has from reason. The scriptures teach us that there is but one God, who is himself the maker and the governor of all things; that this one God is the

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sole object of worship, and that he sent Jesus Christ to instruct mankind, empowered him to work miracles, raised him from the dead, and gave him all the power that he ever was, or is now possessed of.

1. The scriptures contain the clearest and most express declarations, that there is but *one God*, without ever mentioning any exception in favour of a *trinity*, or guarding us against being led into any mistake by such general and unlimited expressions. Ex. xx. 3. *Thou shalt have no other God before me.* DEUT. vi. 4. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.* MARK xii. 29. *The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.* 1 COR. viii. 6. *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* EPH. iv. 5, 6. *One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* 1 TIM. ii. 5. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

On the other hand, not only does the word *trinity* never occur in the scriptures, but it is nowhere said that *there are three persons in this one God*: nor is the doctrine explicitly laid down in any other direct proposition whatever. Christ indeed says, JOHN x. 30. *I and my Father are one*; but he sufficiently explains himself, by praying that his disciples might be one with him in the same sense in which he was one with the Father. JOHN xvii. 21, 22. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; and the*
glory

and Arian hypotheses from scripture. I

glory which thou gavest to me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.

2. This one God is said to have created all things; and no intimation is given of his having employed any *inferior agent or instrument*, in the work of creation. GEN. I. i. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth---v. iii. God said, Let there be light and there was light, &c. Ps. xxxiii. 6. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth---v. ix. He spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast. Is. xlv. 24. Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.*

3. This one God is called the *Father*, i. e. the author of all beings; and he is called God and Father with respect to Christ, as well as all other persons. JOHN vi. 27. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed. JOHN xvii. 3. That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. JOHN xx. 17. Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God. EPH. i. 17. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. COL. i. 3. We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

4. Christ is said expressly to be inferior to the Father, all his power is said to have been

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given him by the Father, and he could do nothing without the Father. JOHN xiv. 28, *My Father is greater than I.* 1 COR. iii. 23. *Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.* 1 COR. xi. 3. *The head of Christ is God.* JOHN v. 19. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself.* JOHN xiv. 10. *The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works.* MATT. xxviii. 18. *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.* 2 PET. i. 17. *He received from God the Father honour and glory.* REV. i. 1. *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him.*

It is now alledged that Christ did not mean that he was inferior to the Father with respect to his *divine nature*, but only with respect to his *human nature*. But if such liberties be taken in explaining a persons meaning, language has no use whatever. On the same principles, it might be asserted that Christ never died, or that he never rose from the dead, secretly meaning his *divine nature* only. There is no kind of imposition but what might be authorized by such an abuse of language as this.

5. Some things were with-held from Christ by his Father, MARK xiii. 32, *But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man; no not the angels that are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father.* MATT. xx. 23. *To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

6. As all the dominion that Christ has was derived from the Father, so it is subordinate to that

that of the Father. I COR. XV. 24, &c. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith that all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued to him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

7. Christ always prayed to the Father, and with as much humility and resignation, as any man, or the most dependent being in the universe, could possibly do. Our Lord's whole history is a proof of this; but especially the scene of his agony in the garden, MATT. XXVI 37, &c. *And he began to be sorry and very heavy; Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death, tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

8. Christ is not only stiled a man even after his resurrection, but the reasoning of the apostles, in some of the passages where he is spoken of, require that he should be considered as a man with respect to his nature, and not in name only, as their reasoning has no force but upon that supposition. ACTS. II. 22. *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of by God, by miracles and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst*

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midst of you. HEB. ii. 17, Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren. HEB. ii. 10, It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. 1 COR. xv. 21. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

9. Whatever exaltation Christ now enjoys it is the gift of his Father, and the reward of his obedience unto death. PHIL. ii. 8, 9. *And being in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. HEB. ii. 9. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. HEB. xii. 2, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy which was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Let it also be considered, that no use whatever is made of the doctrine of the incarnation of the maker of the world, in all the New Testament. We are neither informed why so extraordinary a measure was necessary for the salvation of men, nor that it *was* necessary. All that can be pretended is, that it is *alluded to* in certain expressions. But certainly it might have been expected that a measure of this magnitude should have been expressly declared, if not clearly explained; that mankind might have no doubt.

and Arian hypotheses from scripture

doubt what great things had been done them; and that they might respect their deliverer, as his nature, and his proper rank the creation required.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews evidently considered Christ as a being of a different rank from that of angels; and the reason why he says that he *ought* to be so, is, that he might have a feeling of our infirmities. But, certainly, we shall be more easily satisfied that any person really *felt* as a man, if he was truly a man, and nothing more than a man; than if he was a superior being (and especially a being so far superior to us as the maker of the world must have been) degraded to the condition of a man. Because, if he had any recollection of his former state, the idea of that must have borne him up under his difficulties and sufferings, in such a manner as no mere man could have been supported. And it is supposed by the Arians that Christ *had* a knowledge of his prior state, for they suppose him to have referred to it in his prayer to the Father, for *the glory which he had with him before the world was*; and yet this is hardly consistent with the account that Luke gives of his *increasing in wisdom*.

No person, I think, can, with an unprejudiced mind, attend to these considerations, and the texts of scripture above recited (which are perfectly agreeable to the tenor of the whole) and imagine that it was the intention of the sacred writers to represent Christ either as the supreme God, or as the maker of the world under God.

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Arguments against the trinitarian

There is another hypothesis, of some modern
ans, which represents Christ as having pre-
sisted; but not as having been the creator or
governor of the world, or the medium of all the
dispensations of God to mankind. But those
texts of scripture which seem to be most express
in favour of Christ's pre-existence, do likewise,
by the same mode of interpretation, represent
him as the maker of the world; so that if the
favourers of this hypothesis can suppose the lan-
guage of these texts to be figurative, they may
more easily suppose the other to be figurative
also; and that whatever obscurity there may be
in them, they were not intended to refer to any
pre-existence at all.

The passages of scripture which are supposed
to speak of Christ as the maker of the world,
are the following, viz. JOHN i. 1, 10. EPH. iii.
9. COL. i. 15, &c. HEB. i. 1, &c. These,
I will venture to say, are the texts that most
strongly favour the notion of Christ's pre-exist-
ence, and no person can doubt but that, if they
must be interpreted to assert that Christ pre-ex-
isted at all, they, with the same clearness, assert
that he was the maker of the world. But if
these texts admit of a figurative interpretation,
all the other texts, which are supposed to refer
to the *pre-existence only* will more easily admit of
a similar construction. These two opinions,
therefore, viz. that Christ pre-existed, and that
he was the maker of the world, ought, by all
means, to stand or fall together, and if any per-
son think the latter to be improbable, and con-
trary to the plain tenor of the scriptures (which
uniformly represent the supreme being himself,
without

without the aid of any inferior agent, or instrument, as the maker of the universe) he should abandon the doctrine of simple preexistence also.

In what manner the proper unitarians interpret these passages of scripture, may be seen in my *Familiar Illustration of particu'ar texts of scripture*, in several of the *Socinian tracts*, in three vols quarto, and especially in *Mr. Lindsey's Sequel to his Apology*, p. 455, to which I refer my reader for a farther discussion of this subject.

It is only of late years, that any persons have pretended to separate the two opinions of Christ's pre-existence, and of his being the maker of the world. All the antient Arians maintained both, as did Dr. Clarke, Mr. Whiston, Mr. Emlyn, Mr. Pierce, and their followers; and I do not know that any other hypothesis has appeared in *writing*, except that it is alluded to in the Theological Repository.

IV.

Arguments from history against the divinity and pre-existence of Christ; or a summary view of the evidence for the primitive christians having held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ.

N. B. To each article is subjoined a reference to publications in which the subject is discussed: H. signifying the *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, vol. 1, R. *Reply to the Monthly Review*; and L. *Letters to Dr. Horsley*. To each article is also subjoined, a reference to the following *Maxims of Historical Criticism*.

1. **I**T is acknowledged by early writers of the orthodox persuasion, that two kinds of heresy existed in the time of the apostles, viz.
that

that of those who held that Christ was simply a man; and that of the Gnostics; of whom some believed that Christ was man only in appearance, and others that it was only *Jesus* and not the *Christ* (a preexistent spirit who descended from heaven and dwelt in him) that suffered on the cross. Now the apostle John animadverts with the greatest severity upon the latter, but makes no mention of the former; and can it be thought probable that he would pass it without censure, if he had thought it to be an error; considering how great, and how dangerous an error it has always been thought by those who have considered it as being an error at all. Maxim 12. H. p. 9.

2. The great objection that Jews have always made to christianity in its present state is, that it enjoins the worship of more gods than one; and it is a great article with the christian writers of the second and following centuries to answer this objection. But it does not appear in all the book of Acts, in which we hear much of the cavils of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and in many parts of the Roman empire, that they made any such objection to christianity *then*; nor do the apostles either there, or in their epistles, advance any thing with a view to such an objection. It may be presumed, therefore, that no such offence to the Jews had then been given, by the preaching of a doctrine so offensive to them as that of the divinity of Christ must have been. Maxim 12, 13. L. p. 59.

3. As no Jew had originally any idea of their Messiah being more than a man, and as the apostles and the first christians had certainly the same idea at first concerning Jesus, it may be supposed

supposed that, if ever they had been informed that Jesus was not a man, but either God himself, or the maker of the world under God, we should have been able to trace the *time* and the *circumstances* in which so great a discovery was made to them; and also that we should have perceived the effect which it had upon their minds; at least by some change in their manner of speaking concerning him. But nothing of this kind is to be found in the gospels, in the book of Acts, or in any of the Epistles. We perceive marks enow of other new views of things, especially of the call of the Gentiles to partake of the privileges of the gospel; and we hear much of the disputes and the eager contention which it occasioned. But how much more must all their prejudices have been shocked by the information that the person whom they at first took to be a *mere man*, was not a man, but either God himself, or the maker of the world under God? Maxim 13. L. p. 55.

4. All the Jewish christians, after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was immediately after the age of the apostles, are said to have been *Ebionites*; and these were only of two sorts, some of them holding the miraculous conception of our Saviour, and others believing that he was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary. None of them are said to have believed either that he was God, or the maker of the world under God. And is it at all credible that the body of the Jewish christians, if they had ever been instructed by the apostles in the doctrine of the divinity or pre-existence of Christ, would so soon, and so generally, if not universally, have abandoned that faith? Maxim 6. H. p. 7. R. p. 3. L. p. 14.

5. Had

5 Had Christ been considered as God, or the maker of the world under God, in the early ages of the church, he would naturally have been the proper object of prayer to christians; nay, more so than God the Father, with whom, on the scheme of the doctrine of the trinity, they must have known that they had less immediate intercourse. But prayers to Jesus Christ were not used in early times, but gained ground gradually, with the opinion of Christ being God, and the object of worship. Maxim. 14. L. p. 18.

6. Athanasius represents the apostles as obliged to use great caution not to offend their first converts with the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and as forbearing to urge that topic till they were first well established in the belief of his being the Messiah. He adds, that the Jews being in an error on this subject, drew the Gentiles into it. Chrysostom, and the christian Fathers in general, agree with Athanasius in this representation of the silence of the apostles in their first preaching, both with respect to the divinity of Christ and his miraculous conception. They represent them as leaving their disciples to learn the doctrine of Christ's divinity, by way of *inference* from certain expressions; and they do not pretend to produce any instance in which they taught that doctrine clearly and explicitly. Maxim 13. H. p. 12. L. p. 37, 53.

7. Hegeſippus, the first christian historian, himself a Jew, and therefore probably an Ebionite, enumerating the heresies of his time, mentions several of the Gnostic kind, but not that of Christ being a mere man. He moreover says, that in travelling to Rome, where he arrived

arrived in the time of Anicetus, he found all the churches that he visited held the faith which had been taught by Christ and the apostles, which, in his opinion, was probably that of Christ being not God, but man only. Justin Martyr also, and Clemens Alexandrinus, who wrote after Hegesippus, treat largely of heresies in general, without mentioning, or alluding to, the unitarians. Maxim 8. H. p. 8. R. p. 8.

8. All those who were deemed *heretics* in early times, were cut off from the communion of those who called themselves the *orthodox* christians, and went by some particular name; generally that of their leader. But the unitarians among the Gentiles were not expelled from the assemblies of christians, but worshipped along with those who were called orthodox, and had no particular name till the time of Victor, who excommunicated Theodotus; and a long time after that Epiphanius endeavoured to give them the name of Alogi. And though the Ebionites, probably about or before this time, had been excommunicated by the Gentile christians, it was, as Jerom says, *only* on account of their rigid adherence to the law of Moses. Maxim 5. H. p. 14. L. p. 25.

9. The *Apostles creed* is that which was taught to all catechumens before baptism, and additions were made to it from time to time, in order to exclude those who were denominated *heretics*. Now though there are several articles in that creed which allude to the Gnostics, and tacitly condemn them, there was not, in the time of Tertullian, any article in it that alluded to the unitarians; so that even then any unitarian, at least

least one believing the miraculous conception, might have subscribed it. It may, therefore, be concluded, that simple unitarianism was not deemed heretical at the end of the second century. Maxim 7. L. p. 27.

10. It is acknowledged by Eusebius and others, that the ancient unitarians themselves, constantly asserted that their doctrine was the prevailing opinion of the christian church till the time of Victor. Maxim 2. H. p. 18. R. p. 25.

11. Justin Martyr, who maintains the pre-existence of Christ, is so far from calling the contrary opinion a *heresy*, that what he says on the subject is evidently an apology for his own; and when he speaks of *heretics in general*, which he does with great indignation, as no christians, and having no communication with christians, he mentions the Gnostics only. Maxim 12. H. p. 17. R. p. 15 L. p. 127

12. Irenæus, who was after Justin, and who wrote a large treatise on the subject of heresy says very little concerning the Ebionites, and he never calls them *heretics*. Those Ebionites he speaks of as believing that Christ was the son of Joseph, and he makes no mention of those who believed the miraculous conception. Maxim. 12. H. p. 15. L. p. 32. 118.

13. Tertullian represents the majority of the common or unlearned christians, the *Idiotæ*, as unitarians; and it is among the common people that we always find the oldest opinions in any country, and in any sect, while the learned are most apt to innovate. It may therefore be presumed that, as the unitarian doctrine was held by the common people in the time of Tertullian, it had been more general still before that time, and probably universal in the apostolical

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age. Athanasius also mentions it as a subject of complaint to the orthodox of his age that *the many*, and especially persons of *low understandings*, were inclined to the unitarian doctrine. Maxim 4, 10. R. p. 26 L. p. 49.

14. The first who held and discussed the doctrine of the preexistence and divinity of Christ, acknowledge that their opinions were exceedingly unpopular among the unlearned christians; that these dreaded the doctrine of the trinity, thinking that it infringed upon the doctrine of the supremacy of God the Father; and the learned christians make frequent apologies to them, and to others, for their own opinion. Maxim 10. H. p. 54.

15. The divinity of Christ was first advanced and urged by those who had been heathen philosophers, and especially those who were admirers of the doctrine of Plato, who held the opinion of a second God. Austin says, that he considered Christ as no other than a most excellent man, and that he had no suspicion of the word of God being incarnate in him, or how "the catholic faith differed from the error of Photinus" (one of the last of the proper unitarians whose name is come down to us) till he read the books of Plato; and that he was afterwards confirmed in the Catholic doctrine by reading the scriptures. Constantine in his oration to the fathers of the council of Nice, speaks with commendation of Plato, as having taught the doctrine of "a second God, derived from the supreme God, and subservient to his will." Maxim 11. H. p. 20.

16. There is a pretty easy gradation in the progress of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ;

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as he was first thought to be a God in some qualified sense of the word, a distinguished emanation from the supreme mind; and then the Logos or the wisdom of God personified; and this *logos* was first thought to be only occasionally detached from the Deity, and then drawn into his essence again, before it was imagined to have a *permanent personality*, distinct from that of the source from which it sprung. And it was not till 400 years after that time that Christ was thought to be properly equal to the Father. Whereas on the other hand, though it is now pretended that the apostles taught the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, yet it cannot be denied that in the very times of the apostles, the Jewish church, and many of the Gentiles also, held the opinion of his being a mere man. Here the transition is quite sudden, without any gradation at all. This must naturally have given the greatest alarm, such as is now given to those who are called orthodox, by the present Socinians; and yet nothing of this kind can be perceived. Besides, it is certainly most probable that the christians of those times, urged as they were with the meanness of their master, should incline to *add to*, rather than *take from*, his natural rank and dignity. Maxim 9. H. p. 20, &c. L. p. 73, 134.

V.

Maxims of Historical Criticism, by which the preceding articles may be tried.

1. **W**HEN two persons give different accounts of things, that evidence is to be preferred, which is either in itself more probable, or more agreeable to other credible testimony.

2. Neither

2. Neither is entire credit to be given to any set of men with respect to what is reputable to them, nor to their enemies with respect to what is disreputable; but the account given by the one may be balanced by that of the other. Summary View, No. 10.

3. Accounts of any set of men given by their enemies only are always suspicious. But the confessions of enemies, and circumstances favourable to any body of men, collected from the writings of their adversaries, are deserving of particular regard.

4. It is more natural for men who wish to speak disparagingly of any sect to undervalue their numbers, as well as every thing else relating to them; and it is equally natural for those who wish to speak respectfully of any party, to represent the members of it as more numerous than they are. Summary View, No. 13.

5. When persons form themselves into societies, so as to be distinguishable from others, they never fail to get some *particular name*, either assumed by themselves, or imposed by others. This is necessary, in order to make them the subject of conversation, long periphrases in discourse being very inconvenient. Summary view, No. 8.

6. When particular opinions are ascribed to a particular class of men, without any distinction of the time when those opinions were adopted by them, it may be presumed, that they were supposed to hold those opinions from the time that they received their denomination. Summary View, No. 4.

7. When a particular description is given of
B a class

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a class of persons within any period of time, any person who can be proved to have had the proper character of one of that class, may be deemed to have belonged to it, and to have enjoyed all the privileges of it, whatever they were. Summary View, No. 9.

8. When an historian, or writer of any kind, professedly enumerates the several *species* belonging to any *genus*, or general body of men, and omits any particular species or denomination, which, if it had belonged to the genus, he, from his situation and circumstances, was not likely to have overlooked, it may be presumed that he did not consider that particular species as belonging to the genus. Summary View, No. 7.

9. Great changes in opinion are not usually made of a sudden, and never by great bodies of men. That history, therefore, which represents such changes as having been made gradually, and by easy steps, is always the more probable on that account. Summary View, No. 16.

10. The common or unlearned people, in any country, who do not speculate much, retain longest any opinions with which their minds have been much impressed; and therefore we always look for the oldest opinions in any country, or any class of men, among the common people, and not among the learned. Summary View, No. 13, 14.

11. If any new opinions be introduced into a society, they are most likely to have introduced them, who held opinions similar to them before they joined that society. Summary V. No. 15.

12. If any particular opinion has never failed to excite great indignation in all ages and nations

tions, in which a contrary opinion has been generally received, and that particular opinion can be proved to have existed in any age or country when it did not excite indignation, it may be concluded that it had many partizans in that age or country. For the opinion being the same, it could not of itself be more respectable; and human nature being the same, it could not but have been regarded in the same light, so long as the same stress was laid on the opposite opinion. Summary View, No. 1, 11, 12.

13. When a time is given, in which any very remarkable and interesting opinion was not believed by a certain class of people, and another time in which the belief of it was general, the introduction of such an opinion may always be known by the effects which it will produce upon the minds, and in the conduct of men; by the alarm which it will give to some, and the defence of it by others. If, therefore, no alarm was given, and no defence of it was made within any particular period, it may be concluded that the introduction of it did not take place within that period. Summary View, No. 2, 3, 6.

14. When any particular opinion or practice, is necessarily or customarily accompanied by any other opinion or practice; if the latter be not found within any particular period, it may be presumed that the former did not exist within that period. Summary View, No. 5.

It will be perceived that the whole of this historical evidence is in favour of the proper unitarian doctrine, or that of Christ being a mere man, having been the faith of the primitive church,

church, in opposition to the Arian no less than the Trinitarian hypothesis.

As to the Arian hypothesis in particular, I do not know that it can be traced any higher than Arius himself, or at least the age in which he lived. Both the Gnostics and the Platonizing christians, were equally far from supposing that Christ was a being *created out of nothing*; the former having thought him to be an emanation from the supreme being, and the latter the logos of the Father personified. And though they sometimes applied the term *creation* to this *personification*, still they did not suppose it to have been a creation out of nothing. It was only a new modification of what existed before. For God, they said, was always *rational*, (*λογικόν*), or had within him that principle which afterwards assumed a personal character.

Besides, all the christian Fathers, before the time of Arius, supposed that Christ had a human soul as well as a human body, which no Arians ever admitted, they holding that the *logos* supplied the place of one in Christ.

Upon the whole, the Arian hypothesis appears to me to be destitute of all support from christian antiquity. Whereas it was never denied that the proper unitarian doctrine existed in the time of the apostles; and I think it evident that it was the faith of the bulk of christians, and especially the unlearned christians, for two or three centuries after Christ.

F I N I S.

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